

AIR POUCH JAN 25 1955

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PRIORITY

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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

FROM AMEMBASSY, HELSINKI

TO THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

January 21, 1955

REF

For Dept. Use Only	ACTION	DEF	REASON(S)
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	1-28	0	1-28

SUBJECT: Social Democratic article on Soviet friendship feelers.

There is attached a translation of the editorial published by "Sosialistinen Aikakausi" in its issue for December 1954. The article deals in a receptive spirit with the friendly tone of recent overtures on the part of important Soviet spokesman toward Finnish Social Democratic readers, and is inclined to accept them, at least until reason for suspecting the contrary has been afforded, as sincere in themselves, although it refrains from speculating as to why these overtures have been put forth. The article was written by Väinö Leskinen, editor of the magazine and currently Minister of the Interior in the Finnish Cabinet.

In order to confirm our assumptions regarding the attitude displayed in this editorial, an Embassy officer asked another important Social Democrat, "Do you think that the article might perhaps give rise to over-optimism regarding the prospect for sincere friendly relations between Finland and the Soviet Union, at least among Social Democrats who are not in day-to-day contact with the central leaders of the organization?" The reply was, "The magazine in which it was printed is a theoretical journal, the principal circulation of which is among officials of the party in the capital and in the provinces. These readers are definitely sophisticated enough to read between the lines of the article. The magazine does not, however, circulate among the rank-and-file of Social Democratic labor, and we regard the prospect of its proving misleading to be inconsiderable."

For the Charge d' Affaires a. i.:

H. Bartlett Wells
First Secretary of Embassy

Enclosure: Translation of article.

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The action office must retain this permanent record copy to DC/R file with an endorsement of action taken.

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Translation from "Sosialistinen Aikakausslehti"

Thoughts on the Soviet Union and Ourselves

When tidings of the victory of the Revolution of November 7, 1917 were borne from Russia to the world, Socialists generally speaking took up a position of defending the Bolsheviks, although they had of course had every reason to criticize a violent revolution, in principle above all. That corruption and backwardness, and also that political exploitation of the working people, which had already brought Tsarist Russia to the threshold of overthrow, were, however, a sufficient reason to approve the revolution. This was done also for the reason that Social Democrats believed that the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia would prove to be a brief period of transition. Many Socialist parties went so far in their approval that they considered it right to associate themselves with the Communist Internationale. Thus for example it was only in 1923 that the Norwegian Labor Party resigned from the Comintern.

The change toward a negative stand in the bearing of Social Democrats toward the Soviet Union occurred after the teachings of the Comintern regarding world revolution had stigmatized the Socialists as a threat to the labor movement, and after its application to practice had come in all countries to signify the public and secret battle of the Communists against the Social Democrats. Indeed, these tactics went so far, in Germany for example, that Communists threw their weight behind even the violent deeds of the Nazis, so that even in this fashion it might be possible to undermine the position of the Social Democrats at the helm of the State. Consequently it was natural that under these circumstances Social Democrats should have borne themselves with reserve toward the Soviet Union, and should have taken steps to combat with firmness the growth of Communist influence within their own countries.

The foregoing applies also to the Social Democrats of Finland. The whole Finnish people hated the Tsarist autocracy and its oppressive policy, especially at the turn of the century. But so much more did the representatives of the rising Social Democratic labor movement hate it, when the Tsarist autocracy strove to prevent extension of the influence of the labor movement in this country, without scruple as to means. Since at the same time social conditions and direct terrorism on the part of the right, particularly in country districts, harshly demonstrated to the great majority of the Finnish people as well the need for social reform, opinions here, too, were favorable toward the revolution. Thus it is no wonder that Lenin and Stalin, the first great Soviet leaders, found refuge in Finland while they were preparing revolution in their own country. The support which the revolutionary wing received from within the Social Democratic Party before our Civil War continues to show with what expectations people looked forward to rapid and radical measures.

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It must be particularly remarked that word of the victory of the Russian Bolshevik Government reached the working masses of Finland just at the moment when it had been struck to the ground with bloodshed and violence. When independence was proclaimed, the representatives of our labor movement were convinced that the century-old policy of oppression with respect to Finland was at an end, for which reason our Social Democratic movement expected nothing but good from a Russia ruled by workers.

Yet soon it became clear that Finnish Social Democrats, like Social Democrats throughout the world generally speaking, were in the Comintern's blackbooks. The principal task and aim of the Finnish Communists became the dispersal and destruction of the Social Democratic movement on all fronts. This affected activity in the Diet and even more particularly activity in the labor movement's own circle, in labor unions, in the cooperative movement, in athletic associations etc. The Communist press of that day trumpeted ruthless hatred and rancor against the Social Democrats. Since the Finnish Communist Party was a member of the Comintern, indeed so prominent a one that its representatives occupied especially conspicuous positions in the Comintern leadership, one could come to no other conclusion than that everything that was presented in the name of the Finnish Communist Party must also be a policy toward Finland, and particularly toward the Social Democrats of the country, which had been approved by the rulers of Russia.

Thus things continued, as we know well, through the period between the World Wars. That change of front which occurred elsewhere in Europe about the middle of the 30's, the so-called common-front tactics, did not come to affect our country, since the Finnish Communist Party had under the pressure of the Lapua Movement been declared illegal. But in France this signified for the Social Democrats, in a fashion, the decisive commencement of the overthrow of their position in power, which subsequently led to the crushing defeat of that country's Social Democratic movement.

Frankness nevertheless requires acknowledgment that the suspicions of the Soviet Union were after the First World War well-founded, insofar as that in this country there became emphasized in rightist circles a very perceptible aggressiveness against all dealings with the Soviet Union. The libellous style and tone of the various spokesman of the right in our country in no way differed from what we became accustomed to, during the war and thereafter, in the statements of Armas Aikio.

War is ordinarily a disturbing factor in international relationships. If two neighboring countries fight a war with each other, it is very rarely—at least at present—that this is calculated to improve relationships between these neighbors. Unfortunately there has not been created an international law which could in practice resolve differences between nations, nor has there been created an executive power which could carry out an eventual judgment in this field. The stronger is always right, declares the unwritten international law of the Atomic Age. Thus within the limits of

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this article we have no occasion to return to the late war between Finland and the Soviet Union. Perhaps the best thing to do is join in with Vice Premier Mikoyan's toast to the patriots of both countries.

One cannot single out any official Soviet attitude toward the Social Democrats from the period since the wars. In reaching conclusions we have to limit ourselves to those rare statements which have on various occasions appeared in the columns of Pravda and Izvestiya as well as elsewhere. On the other hand, it is difficult to believe that the tasteless propaganda of the Finnish-language programs of the Moscow radio are a seriously intended policy of the Soviet Union with respect to Finland's largest party, which is a labor party at that. The above-mentioned occasional newspaper notices have unquestionably been ill-disposed toward Finland's Social Democrats.

For their part, the Finnish Communists have behaved in practice always, with the exception of most recent times, as they did during the 1920's, although in their propaganda they have been so good as to seek to distinguish between Social Democratic leaders and the true working masses. Characteristic of their activity, as before, has been the same tactics of trying to take over labor organizations and joint societies, until the Social Democrats put an end to all this activity.

It is appropriate to recall once more the phases in our history which are described above. This is important particularly because of late it has been impossible not to notice that the Soviet Union has desired, in clearly perceptible fashion, to depart from the policy which has hitherto been followed with respect to Social Democrats in general and to the leaders of Social Democracy here in particular. At the same time as certain Soviet leaders have made public pronouncements stressing goodwill and openmindedness toward our country and its people, they have also sought to emphasize, with respect to Social Democrats, a desire for sincere common understanding and its importance in the conduct of the common business of our countries and peoples. Perhaps this in part explains the confusion which has been characteristic of the attitudes of the Communist movement of late.

It is not in the least necessary to broaden the field of inquiry of this article by setting out the causes of this new wave of friendship and determining what connection it may have with the current international situation. Faithful to our custom, we shall satisfy ourselves with merely noting what is most material to Finland at this moment. In this connection we must sincerely join in the satisfaction by reason of the fact that in the most recent exchange of notes there has been manifested a true desire to take into account Finland's special position. Mr. Mikoyan's numerous assurances of sincere friendship and trust have assuredly for their part not been mere courtesies. They will surely be noted with great joy from one side of our community to the other. In the same fashion it is natural that the Finnish Social Democratic party notes with satisfaction that the accusation, brought against it publicly during decades, that it is motivated by hatred

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From Helsinki

by hatred and aggressiveness in its policy toward the Soviet Union, is in authoritative quarters in process of being converted into an objective attitude.

Social Democratic movements and labor organizations all over the world are fighting in the interest of those of little means, whether they are active in America or Japan, India or Germany. A living workers' movement must always be able to discuss tasks and aims with its spiritual counterparts, for these tasks elsewhere in the world cannot be directed in another sense than against social and political reaction. Finnish Social Democracy has not undertaken to accept orders even from its own Internationale. On the other hand it does not aspire to advise brother parties or their governing boards regarding the character of their international activities. We, like all our people, shall be satisfied in remaining aside from great power controversies.

The vital necessities for the existence of Finnish Social Democracy--the independence and freedom of the country--mean independence and freedom in international proceedings as well. These vital necessities do not forbid intercourse with communist countries: quite the contrary, what is right and advantageous for the nation is also right and advantageous from the standpoint of Social Democracy. On the other hand it is impossible to think that by reason of this intercourse Social Democracy should forbid intellectual collaboration with brother organizations elsewhere in the world. Just as little could it demolish that bridge of historic understanding which it has constructed, through decades of labor, to the Scandinavian countries, or sacrifice that sincere friendship with which it is favored on the part of other countries, independently of their social structure or size. Against this background the friendship now in process of being born between Finland and the Soviet Union constitutes the most positive link, to date, between our countries. The old truth holds good here as well -- a small country cannot have too many friends.

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